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INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5919
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 7138

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 003821

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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - DAVID FIRESTEIN
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. MIDTERM ELECTIONS

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies gave extensive coverage November 9 to the aftermath of President Chen Shui-bian's televised address to the Taiwan people Sunday evening on the subject of the indictments of First Lady Wu Shu-chen; and to the Democrats' triumph in the U.S. mid-term elections Wednesday. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's largest-circulation daily, front-paged the results of the U.S. midterm elections and ran a banner headline on page four that said "Change of Majority Party in U.S. Congress; Basic Position in Support of Taiwan Remains Unchanged."

12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" called the U.S. midterm election a popular vote on U.S. President George W. Bush and the war in Iraq. An editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" also said the significance of this election is to "punish Bush," giving him a hard time during the remainder of his term. An opinion piece in the pro-status quo "China Times" said the Republican Party will have to re-adjust its policy direction and administrative style in order to retain the helm in 2008. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" said the Democrats' triumph signaled the U.S. voters' rejection of Bush's foreign policy. End summary.

A) "Democratic Party and DPP"

Columnist Antonio Chiang commented in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 600,000] (11/9):

"The statement 'All politics is local' failed to work in this year's U.S. midterm election. This election is a popular vote on [U.S. President George W.] Bush and the war in Iraq, and Bush's domestic and foreign policies will be significantly restrained after the Democratic Party gains control of the Congress. ... The U.S. Congress, which is like a rubber stamp, has been under the control of the Republican Party over the past six years, and the public antipathy toward the Bush administration has been growing. But the Democratic Party also let people down; it has opinions but has made no proposals. In this election, [the American] people used their votes to punish Bush; it was not the Democratic Party's policies that have moved the people. ..."

B) "U.S. Voters Punish Bush, and DPP Is Indulgent toward A-Bian!"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (11/9):

"... The change of majority party [in the U.S. Congress] this time was a result of the fact that American voters are displeased with the Bush administration's handling of the war in Iraq; the fact that [the Bush administration] had lied and failed to respond accordingly as the war [in Iraq] evolved, resulting in the deaths of 3,000 U.S. soldiers on the battlefield, has greatly triggered the American

people's grave concern over 'another Vietnam war.' In addition, the corruption and sex scandals of the Republican Party, which erupted one after the other, also crushed the image of the ruling party. Given weakening U.S. economic development and the widening gap between the poor and the rich in [U.S.] society, the voters finally chose to vent their outrage in their ballots. Judged from this perspective, the significance of this election is in reality to 'punish Bush,' giving this rude and high-handed president a hard time in the remainder of his term, which will last less than two years. ..."

C) "In the Wake of U.S. Republican's Severe Defeat"

Cheng Tuan-yao, the Chair of the American and European Research Division at the Institute of International Relations, commented in an opinion piece in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (11/9):

"... Does the [Republican Party's] defeat in this midterm election indicate that the party's conservative revolution that has been going on since 1994 has come to an end? It may be too early to tell now. But it is certain that the Republican government, having lost its control over Congress, will have to re-adjust its policy direction and administrative style, abandon its assertions of excessive conservatism, and move toward a middle and pragmatic line of bi-partisan operation, if it expects to make a difference in the next two years and retain its opportunity to rule in 2008. But given [U.S. President George W.] Bush's willful performance over the past six years, one cannot be too optimistic about future prospects. ..."

D) "Democrats' Win Signals People's Rejection of Bush Foreign Policy"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] (11/9):

"The Democrats won control of the U.S. House of Representatives yesterday after a dozen years of Republican rule - an indication that the American public is tired of the Iraq war and the presidency of George W. Bush. ... The Democrats' triumph will make things difficult for President Bush. They may push a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. ..."

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